

Big Five Personality Traits: The OCEAN Model Explained

[Courtney E. Ackerman, MSc.](#) 10-04-2020



The Big Five personality traits are all about the following question:

“Who are you?”

It’s a simple enough question, but it’s one of the hardest ones to answer.

There are many ways to interpret that question. An answer could include your name, your job title, your role in your family, your hobbies or passions, and your place of residence or birth. A more comprehensive answer might include a description of your beliefs and values.

Every one of us has a different answer to this question, and each answer tells a story about who we are. While we may have a lot in common with our fellow humans, like race, religion, sexual orientation, skills, and eye color, there is one thing that makes us each unique: personality.

You can meet hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands of people, but no two will be exactly the same. Which raises the question: how do we categorize and classify something as widely varied as personality?

In this article, we’ll define what personality is, explore the different ways personalities can be classified (and how those classifications have evolved), and explain the OCEAN model, one of the most ubiquitous personality inventories in modern psychology.

Before you read on, we thought you might like to [download our 3 Positive Psychology Exercises for free](#). These science-based exercises will explore fundamental aspects of positive psychology including strengths, values and self-compassion and will give you the tools to enhance the wellbeing of your clients, students or employees.

You can download the free PDF [here](#).

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What is Personality?

Personality is an easy concept for most of us to grasp. It's what makes you, you. It encompasses all the traits, characteristics, and quirks that set you apart from everyone else.

In the world of psychology research, personality is a little more complicated. The definition of personality can be complex, and the way it is defined can influence how it is understood and measured.

According to the researchers at the Personality Project, personality is “the coherent pattern of affect, cognition, and desires (goals) as they lead to behavior” (Revelle, 2013).

Meanwhile, the American Psychological Association (APA) defines personality as “individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving” (2017).

However you define personality, it's an important part of who you are. In fact, personality shows a positive correlation with life satisfaction (Boyce, Wood, & Powdthavee, 2013). With personality having such a large impact on our lives, it's important to have a reliable way to conceptualize and measure it.

The most prevalent personality framework is the Big Five, also known as the five-factor model of personality. Not only does this theory of personality apply to people in many countries and cultures around the world (Schmitt et al., 2007), it provides a reliable assessment scale for measuring personality.

To understand how we got to the Big Five, we have to go back to the beginning of personality research.

Personality Research: A Brief Review



The history of personality research can be roughly divided into seven periods, each with different prevailing theories and underlying philosophies.

Ancient Greece

It seems that for as long as there have been humans with personalities, there have been personality theories and classification systems.

The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates hypothesized that two binaries define temperament: hot versus cold and moist versus dry. This theory resulted in four possible temperaments (hot/moist, hot/dry, cold/moist, cold/dry) called *humors*, which were thought to be key factors in both physical health issues and personality peculiarities.

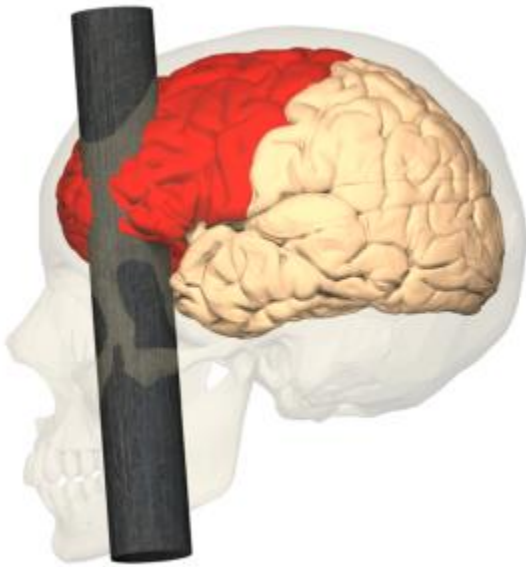
Later, the philosopher Plato suggested a classification of four personality types or factors: artistic (iconic), sensible (pistic), intuitive (noetic), and reasoning (dianoetic).

Plato's renowned student [Aristotle](#) mused on a possible connection between the physical body and personality, but this connection was not a widespread belief until the rise of phrenology and the shocking case of Phineas Gage.

Phrenology and Phineas Gage

Phrenology, a pseudoscience that is not based on any verifiable evidence, was promoted by a neuroanatomist named Franz Gall in the late 18th century. Phrenology hypothesizes a direct relationship between the physical properties of different areas of the [brain](#) (such as size, shape, and density) and opinions, attitudes, and behaviors.

While phrenology was debunked relatively quickly, it marked one of the first attempts to tether an individual's [traits and characteristics](#) to the physical brain. And it wasn't long before actual evidence of this connection presented itself.



In 1848, one man's unfortunate accident forever changed mainstream views on the interconnectivity of the brain and personality. A railroad construction worker named Phineas Gage was on the job when a premature detonation of explosive powder launched a 3.6 foot (1.1 m), 13.25 pound (6 kg) iron rod into Gage's left cheek, through his head, and out the other side.

Gage, astonishingly, survived the incident, and his only physical ailments (at first) were blindness in his left eye and a wound where the rod penetrated his head.

However, his friends reported that his personality had completely changed after the accident—suddenly he could not keep appointments, showed little respect or compassion for others, and uttered “the grossest profanity.” He died in 1860 after suffering from a series of seizures (Twomey, 2010).

This was the first case that was widely recognized as clear evidence of a link between the physical brain and personality, and it gained national attention. Interest in the psychological conception of personality spiked, leading to the next phase in personality research.

Sigmund Freud

The Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud is best known as the father of [psychoanalysis](#), an intensive form of therapy that digs deep into an individual's life—especially childhood—to understand and treat psychological ailments.

However, Freud also focused on personality, and some of his ideas are familiar to many people. One of his most fleshed-out theories held that the human mind consists of three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego.

The id is the primal part of the human mind that runs on instinct and aims for survival at all costs. The ego bridges the gap between the id and our day-to-day experiences, providing realistic ways to achieve the wants and needs of the id and coming up with justifications for these desires. The superego is the part of the mind that represents humans' higher qualities, providing the moral framework that humans use to regulate their baser behavior.

While scientific studies have largely not supported Freud's idea of a three-part mind, this theory did bring awareness to the fact that at least some thoughts, behaviors, and [motivations](#) are unconscious. After Freud, people began to believe that behavior was truly the tip of the iceberg when assessing a person's attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and unique personality.

Carl Jung

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung was influenced by Freud, his mentor, but ultimately came up with his own system of personality. Jung believed that there were some overarching types of personality that each person could be classified into based on dichotomous variables.

For example, Jung believed that individuals were firmly within one of two camps:

1. [Introverts](#), who gain energy from the “internal world” or from solitude with the self;
2. Extroverts, who gain energy from the “external world” or from interactions with others.

This idea is still prevalent today, and research has shown that this is a useful differentiator between two relatively distinct types of people. Today, most psychologists see introversion and extroversion as existing on a spectrum rather than a binary. It can also be situational, as some situations exhaust our energy one day and on other days, fuel us to be more social.

Jung also identified what he found to be four essential psychological functions:

1. Thinking;
2. Feeling;
3. Sensation;
4. Intuition.

He believed that each of these functions could be experienced in an introverted or extroverted fashion and that one of these functions is more dominant than the others in each person.

Jung's work on personality had a huge impact on the field of personality research that's still felt today. In fact, the popular Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® test is based in part on Jung's theories of personality.

Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Detail)



SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Personal growth
Achieving potential
Self-fulfillment



ESTEEM

Prestige
Achievement
Recognition



BELONGING

Connection
Love
Relationships



SAFETY

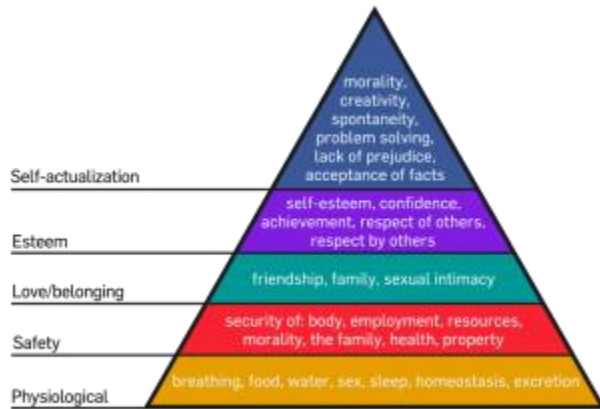
Resources
Security



PHYSIOLOGICAL

Food
Shelter
Warmth
Sleep

American psychologist Abraham Maslow furthered an idea that Freud brought into the mainstream: At least some aspects or drivers of personality are buried deep within the unconscious mind.



Maslow hypothesized that personality is driven by a set of needs that each human has. He organized these needs into a hierarchy, with each level requiring fulfillment before a higher level can be fulfilled.

The pyramid is organized from bottom to top (pictured to the right), beginning with the most basic need (McLeod, 2007):

- Physiological needs (food, water, warmth, rest);
- Safety needs (security, safety);
- Belongingness and love needs (intimate relationships, friends);
- [Esteem](#) needs (prestige and feelings of accomplishment);
- [Self-actualization](#) needs (achieving one's full potential, self-fulfillment).

Maslow believed that all humans aim to fulfill these needs, usually in order from the most basic to the most transcendent, and that these motivations result in the behaviors that make up a personality.

[Carl Rogers](#), another American psychologist, built upon Maslow's work, agreeing that all humans strive to fulfill needs, but Rogers disagreed that there is a one-way relationship between striving toward need fulfillment and personality. Rogers believed that the many different methods humans use to meet these needs spring from personality, rather than the other way around.

Rogers' contributions to the field of personality research signaled a shift in thinking about personality. Personality was starting to be seen as a collection of traits and characteristics that were not necessarily permanent rather than a single, succinct construct that can be easily described.

Multiple Personality Traits

In the 1940s, German-born psychologist Hans Eysenck built off of Jung's dichotomy of introversion versus extroversion, hypothesizing that there were only two defining [personality traits](#): extroversion and neuroticism. Individuals could be high or low on each of these traits, leading to four key types of personalities.

Eysenck also connected personality to the physical body in a greater way than most earlier psychology researchers and philosophers. He posited that differences in the limbic system resulted in varying hormones and hormonal activation. Those who were already highly stimulated (introverts) would naturally seek out less stimulation while those who were naturally less stimulated (extroverts) would search for greater stimulation.

Eysenck's thoroughness in connecting the body to the mind and personality pushed the field toward a more scientific exploration of personality based on objective evidence rather than solely philosophical musings.

American psychologist Lewis Goldberg may be the most prominent researcher in the field of personality psychology. His groundbreaking work whittled down Raymond Cattell's 16 "fundamental factors" of personality into five primary factors, similar to the five factors found by fellow [psychology researchers](#) in the 1960s.

The five factors Goldberg identified as primary factors of personality are:

1. Extroversion
2. Agreeableness
3. Conscientiousness
4. Neuroticism
5. Openness to experience

This five-factor model caught the attention of two other renowned personality researchers, Paul Costa and Robert McCrae, who confirmed the validity of this model. This model was named the "Big Five" and launched thousands of explorations of personality within its framework, across multiple continents and cultures and with a wide variety of populations.

The Big Five brings us right up to the current era in personality research. The Big Five theory still holds sway as the prevailing theory of personality, but some salient aspects of current personality research include:

- Conceptualizing traits on a spectrum instead of as dichotomous variables;
- Contextualizing personality traits (exploring how personality shifts based on environment and time);
- Emphasizing the biological bases of personality and behavior.

Since the Big Five is still the most mainstream and widely accepted framework for personality, the rest of this piece will focus exclusively on this framework.

OCEAN: The Five Factors

Goldberg's Five Factors of Personality (OCEAN)



As noted above, the five factors grew out of decades of personality research, growing from the foundations of Cattell's 16 factors and eventually becoming the most accepted model of personality to date. This model has been translated into several languages and applied in dozens of cultures, resulting in research that not only confirms its validity as a theory of personality but also establishes its validity on an international level.

These five factors do not provide completely exhaustive explanations of personality, but they are known as the Big Five because they encompass a large portion of personality-related terms. The five factors are not necessarily traits in and of themselves, but factors in which many related traits and characteristics fit.

For example, the factor agreeableness encompasses terms like generosity, amiability, and warmth on the positive side and aggressiveness and temper on the negative side. All of these traits and characteristics (and many more) make up the broader factor of agreeableness.

Below, we'll explain each factor in more detail and provide examples and related terms to help you get a sense of what aspects and quirks of personality these factors cover.

A popular acronym for the Big Five is OCEAN. The five factors are laid out in that order here.

1. Openness to Experience



Openness to experience has been described as the depth and complexity of an individual's mental life and experiences (John & Srivastava, 1999). It is also sometimes called intellect or imagination.

Openness to experience concerns people's willingness to try new things, their ability to be vulnerable, and their capability to think outside the box.

Common traits related to openness to experience include:

- Imagination;
- Insightfulness;
- Varied interests;
- Originality;
- Daringness;
- Preference for variety;
- Cleverness;
- [Creativity](#);
- Curiosity;
- Perceptiveness;
- Intellect;
- Complexity/depth.

An individual who is high in openness to experience is likely someone who has a love of learning, enjoys the arts, engages in a creative career or hobby, and likes meeting new people (Lebowitz, 2016a).

An individual who is low in openness to experience probably prefers routine over variety, sticks to what he or she knows, and prefers less abstract arts and entertainment.

2. Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is a trait that can be described as the tendency to control impulses and act in socially acceptable ways, behaviors that facilitate goal-directed behavior (John & Srivastava, 1999). Conscientious people excel in their ability to delay gratification, work within the rules, and plan and organize effectively.

Traits within the conscientiousness factor include:

- Persistence;
- Ambition;
- Thoroughness;
- [Self-discipline](#);
- Consistency;
- Predictability;
- Control;
- Reliability;
- Resourcefulness;
- Hard work;
- Energy;
- Perseverance;
- Planning.

People high in conscientiousness are likely to be successful in school and in their careers, to excel in [leadership positions](#), and to doggedly pursue their goals with determination and forethought (Lebowitz, 2016a).

People low in conscientiousness are much more likely to procrastinate and to be flighty, impetuous, and impulsive.

3. Extroversion

This factor has two familiar ends of its spectrum: extroversion and introversion. It concerns where an individual draws their energy from and how they interact with others. In general, extroverts draw energy from or recharge by interacting with others, while introverts get tired from interacting with others and replenish their energy with solitude.



- Sociableness;
- [Assertiveness](#);
- Merriness;
- Outgoing nature;
- Energy;
- Talkativeness;
- Ability to be articulate;
- Fun-loving nature;
- Tendency for affection;
- Friendliness;
- Social confidence.

The traits associated with extroversion are:

People high in extroversion tend to seek out opportunities for social interaction, where they are often the “life of the party.” They are comfortable with others, are gregarious, and are prone to action rather than contemplation (Lebowitz, 2016a).

People low in extroversion are more likely to be people “of few words who are quiet, introspective, reserved, and thoughtful.

4. Agreeableness

This factor concerns how well people get along with others. While extroversion concerns sources of energy and the pursuit of interactions with others, agreeableness concerns one’s orientation to others. It is a construct that rests on how an individual generally interacts with others.

The following traits fall under the umbrella of agreeableness:

- Altruism;
- Trust;
- Modesty;
- Humbleness;

- Patience;
- Moderation;
- Tact;
- Politeness;
- [Kindness](#);
- Loyalty
- Unselfishness;
- Helpfulness;
- Sensitivity;
- Amiability;
- Cheerfulness;
- Consideration.

People high in agreeableness tend to be well-liked, respected, and sensitive to the needs of others. They likely have few enemies and are affectionate to their friends and loved ones, as well as sympathetic to the plights of strangers (Lebowitz, 2016a).

People on the low end of the agreeableness spectrum are less likely to be trusted and liked by others. They tend to be callous, blunt, rude, ill-tempered, antagonistic, and sarcastic. Although not all people who are low in agreeableness are cruel or abrasive, they are not likely to leave others with a warm fuzzy feeling.

5. Neuroticism

Neuroticism is not a factor of meanness or incompetence, but one of confidence and being comfortable in one's own skin. It encompasses one's [emotional stability](#) and general temper.

These traits are commonly associated with neuroticism:



- Awkwardness;
- [Pessimism](#);

- Moodiness;
- Jealousy;
- Testiness;
- Fear;
- Nervousness;
- Anxiety;
- Timidness;
- Wariness;
- Self-criticism;
- Lack of [confidence](#);
- Insecurity;
- Instability;
- Oversensitivity.

Those high in neuroticism are generally prone to anxiety, sadness, worry, and low self-esteem. They may be temperamental or easily angered, and they tend to be self-conscious and unsure of themselves (Lebowitz, 2016a).

Individuals who score on the low end of neuroticism are more likely to feel confident, sure of themselves, and adventurous. They may also be brave and unencumbered by worry or self-doubt.

The Trait Network



Research has shown that these factors are interconnected, and also connect with many other aspects of one's life.

Because the Big Five are so big, they encompass many other traits and bundle related characteristics into one cohesive factor.

Openness to Experience

Openness to experience has been found to contribute to one's likelihood of obtaining a [leadership position](#), likely due to the ability to entertain new ideas and think outside the box

(Lebowitz, 2016a). Openness is also connected to universalism values, which include promoting peace and tolerance and seeing all people as equally deserving of justice and equality (Douglas, Bore, & Munro, 2016).

Further, research has linked openness to experience with broad intellectual skills and knowledge, and it may increase with age (Schretlen, van der Hulst, Pearlson, & Gordon, 2010). This indicates that openness to experience leads to gains in knowledge and skills, and it naturally increases as a person ages and has more experiences to learn from.

Not only has openness been linked to [knowledge and skills](#), but it was also found to correlate positively with creativity, originality, and a tendency to explore their inner selves with a therapist or psychiatrist, and to correlate negatively with conservative political attitudes (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999).

Not only has openness been found to correlate with many traits, but it has also been found to be extremely stable over time—one study explored trait stability over 45 years and found participants' openness to experience (along with extroversion and neuroticism) remained relatively stable over that period (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999)

Concerning the other Big Five factors, openness to experience is weakly related to neuroticism and extroversion and is mostly unrelated to agreeableness and conscientiousness (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996).

Openness to experience is perhaps the trait that is least likely to change over time, and perhaps most likely to help an individual [grow](#). Those high in openness to experience should capitalize on their advantage and explore the world, themselves, and their passions. These individuals make strong and creative leaders and are most likely to come up with the next big innovation.

Conscientiousness

This factor has been linked to achievement, conformity, and seeking out security, as well as being negatively correlated to placing a premium on stimulation and excitement (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002). Those high in conscientiousness are also likely to value order, duty, achievement, and self-discipline, and they consciously practice deliberation and work toward increased competence (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002).

In light of these correlations, it's not surprising that conscientiousness is also strongly related to post-training learning (Woods, Patterson, Koczwara, & Sofat, 2016), effective job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), and intrinsic and extrinsic career success (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999).

The long-term study by Soldz and Vaillant (1999) found that conscientiousness was positively correlated with adjustment to life's challenges and mature defensive responses, indicating that

those high in conscientiousness are often well-prepared to tackle any obstacles that come their way.

Conscientiousness is negatively correlated with depression, smoking, substance abuse, and engagement in psychiatric treatment. The trait was also found to correlate somewhat negatively with neuroticism and somewhat positively with agreeableness, but it had no discernible relation to the other factors (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996).

From these results, it's clear that those gifted with high conscientiousness have a distinct advantage over those who are not. Those with high conscientiousness should attempt to use their [strengths](#) to the best of their abilities, including organization, planning, perseverance, and tendency towards high achievement.

As long as the highly conscientious do not fall prey to exaggerated perfectionism, they are likely to achieve many of the traditional markers of success.

Extroversion

Those high in extroversion are likely to value achievement and stimulation, and unlikely to value tradition or conformity (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002). Extroverts are often assertive, active, and sociable, shunning self-denial in favor of excitement and pleasure.

Considering these findings, it follows that high extroversion is a strong predictor of [leadership](#), and contributes to the success of managers and salespeople as well as the success of all job levels in training proficiency (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Over a lifetime, high extroversion correlates positively with a high income, conservative political attitudes, early life adjustment to challenges, and social relationships (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999).



The same long-term study also found that extroversion was fairly stable across the years, indicating that extroverts and introverts do not often shift into the opposite state (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999).

Because of its ease of measurement and general stability over time, extroversion is an excellent predictor of effective functioning and general well-being (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006),

positive emotions (Verduyn & Brans, 2012), and overconfidence in task performance (Schaefer, Williams, Goodie, & Campbell, 2004).

When analyzed in relation to the other Big Five factors, extroversion correlated weakly and negatively with neuroticism and was somewhat positively related to openness to experience (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996).

Those who score high in extroversion are likely to make friends easily and enjoy interacting with others, but they may want to pay extra attention to making well-thought-out decisions and considering the needs and sensitivities of others.

Agreeableness

Agreeable individuals tend to value benevolence, tradition, and conformity while avoiding placing too much importance on power, achievement, or the pursuit of selfish pleasures (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002).

Agreeableness may be motivated by the desire to fulfill social obligations or follow established norms, or it may spring from a genuine concern for the welfare of others. Whatever the motivation, it is rarely accompanied by cruelty, ruthlessness, or selfishness (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002).



Those high in agreeableness are also more likely to have positive peer and family relationships, model [gratitude](#) and [forgiveness](#), attain desired jobs, live long lives, experience relationship satisfaction, and volunteer in their communities (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006).

Agreeableness affects many life outcomes because it influences any arena in which interactions with others are important—and that includes almost everything. In the long-term, high agreeableness is related to strong social support and healthy midlife adjustment but is slightly negatively correlated to creativity (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999).

Those who are friendly and endearing to others may find themselves without the motivation to achieve a traditional measure of success, and they might choose to focus on family and friends instead.

Agreeableness correlates weakly with extroversion and is somewhat negatively related to neuroticism and somewhat positively correlated to conscientiousness (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996).

Individuals high in agreeableness are likely to have many close friends and a good relationship with family members, but there is a slight risk of consistently putting others before themselves and missing out on opportunities for success, learning, and development. Those who are friendly and agreeable to others can leverage their strengths by turning to their social support networks for help when needed and finding fulfillment in positive engagement with their communities.

Neuroticism

Neuroticism has been found to correlate negatively with self-esteem and general [self-efficacy](#), as well as with an internal locus of control (feeling like one has control over his or her own life) (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002). In fact, these four traits are so closely related that they may fall under one umbrella construct.

In addition, neuroticism has been linked to poorer job performance and lower motivation, including motivation related to goal-setting and self-efficacy (Judge & Ilies, 2002). It likely comes as no surprise that instability and vulnerability to stress and anxiety do not support one's best work.

The anxiety and self-consciousness components of neuroticism are also positively linked to more traditional values and are negatively correlated with achievement values. The hostility and impulsiveness components of neuroticism relate positively to hedonism (or seeking pleasure without regards to the long-term and a disregard for right and wrong) and negatively relate to benevolence, tradition, and conformity (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002).

The 45-year-long study from researchers Soldz and Vaillant showed that neuroticism, over the course of the study, was negatively correlated with smoking cessation and healthy adjustment to life and correlated positively with drug usage, alcohol abuse, and [mental health](#) issues (1999).

Neuroticism was found to correlate somewhat negatively with agreeableness and conscientiousness, in addition to a weak, negative relationship with extroversion and openness to experience (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996).

Overall, high neuroticism is related to added difficulties in life, including addiction, poor job performance, and unhealthy adjustment to life's changes. Scoring high on neuroticism is not an immediate sentence to a miserable life, but those in this group would benefit from investing in improvements to their self-confidence, building resources to draw on in times of difficulty, and avoiding any substances with addictive properties.

Assessing the Big Five



There have been a few attempts to measure the five factors of the Big Five framework, but the most reliable and valid measurements come from the Big Five Inventory and the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R).

Big Five Inventory

This inventory was developed by Goldberg in 1993 to measure the five dimensions of the Big Five personality framework. It contains 44 items and measures each factor through its corresponding facets:

- Extroversion;
- Gregariousness;
- Assertiveness;
- Activity;
- Excitement-seeking;
- [Positive emotions](#);
- Warmth;
- Agreeableness;
- Trust;
- Straightforwardness;
- Altruism;
- Compliance;
- Modesty;
- Tender-mindedness;
- Conscientiousness;
- Competence;
- Order;
- Dutifulness;
- Achievement striving;
- Self-discipline;
- Deliberation;
- Neuroticism;
- Anxiety;

- Angry hostility;
- [Depression](#);
- Self-consciousness;
- Impulsiveness;
- Vulnerability;
- Openness to experience;
- Ideas;
- Fantasy;
- Aesthetics;
- Actions;
- Feelings;
- [Values](#).

The responses to items concerning these facets are combined and summarized to produce a score on each factor. This inventory has been widely used in psychology research and is still quite popular, although the Revised NEO Personality Inventory has also gained much attention in recent years.

To learn more about the BFI or to see the items, click [here](#) to find a PDF with more information.

Revised NEO Personality Inventory

The original NEO Personality Inventory was created by personality researchers Paul Costa Jr. and Robert McCrae in 1978. It was later revised several times to keep up with advancements (in 1990, 2005, and 2010). Initially, the NEO Personality Inventory was named for the three main domains as the researchers understood them at the time: neuroticism, extroversion, and openness.

This scale is also based on the six facets of each factor and includes 240 items rated on a 5-point scale. For a shorter scale, Costa and McCrae also offer the NEO Five-Factor Inventory, which contains only 60 items and measures just the overall domains instead of all facets.

The NEO PI-R requires only a 6th-grade reading level and can be self-administered without a scoring professional.

Access to the NEO PI-R isn't as widely available as the BFI, but you can learn more about the scale or purchase it for your own use [here](#).

A Take-Home Message

Personality is a complex topic of research in psychology, and it has a long history of shifting philosophies and theories. While it's easy to conceptualize personality on a day-to-day level, conducting valid scientific research on personality can be much more complex.

The Big Five can help you to learn more about your own personality and where to focus your energy and attention. The first step in effectively leveraging your strengths is to learn what your strengths are.

Whether you use the Big Five Inventory, the NEO PI-R, or something else entirely, we hope you're able to learn where you fall on the OCEAN spectrums.

What do you think about the OCEAN model? Do you think the traits it describes apply to your personality? Let us know in the comments below.

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About the Author

[Courtney Ackerman](#), MSc., is a graduate of the positive organizational psychology and evaluation program at Claremont Graduate University. She is currently working as a researcher for the State of California and her professional interests include survey research, well-being in the workplace, and compassion.